

~~SECRET~~
~~EXTRACTS~~

DECLASSIFIED 135
No. 5200
MARCH 1989, 27 Sep 58
By Ruth Wesley, Librarian
on 15 Sep 1960

D 731.1

.N 51 #135

du

EXTRACTS FROM AFHQ INTELLIGENCE NOTES NO. 50, DATED 14

PART C - TACTICS AND MISCELLANEOUS

I. RUSSIAN STREET FIGHTING METHODS.

(Source: War Office, London, 1 March 44)

The following notes attempt to give an outline summary of the main features of the Red Army's tactics in taking a town by storm. As a working basis, the case chosen is that of a town requiring the best part of a division to capture it, one brigade (= Amer. Regt) being allotted the task of storming the town by frontal assault.

a. Preparation for the Assault.

Before the actual assault by this brigade takes place, the remaining troops of the division, i.e. in the case chosen, two brigades with some supporting arms and armour, are given the task of cutting off the town and isolating it from the rest of the enemy defences. This enveloping force is organised in two echelons - the first having the task of surrounding and as far as possible isolating the strong point, the second of dealing with counter-attacks by relieving enemy forces. In this stage of the assault the supporting armour is used to penetrate the enemy defences and to sever communications. It is clear, too, that careful reconnaissance, artillery preparation and air bombardment all play an important part in the stages preceding the assault.

b. The Frontal Assault.

The frontal attack on the town by the brigade to whom this task has been allotted then takes place. The object of this attack is to break through the enemy defence lines and reach the town itself, and the assault takes the form of several simultaneous attacks from different directions in order to disperse and pin down the enemy forces and fire power within the town. The normal practice is to allocate two battalions to the assault, leaving one battalion in reserve, with the tasks of dealing with enemy counter-attacks and of reinforcing, where necessary, the assaulting battalions.

c. Composition of the Assault Groups.

For the purpose of the actual assault, each battalion is divided into assault groups, each assault group being allotted a very definite task, e.g. the capture of one or more blocks within the town. The composition of the groups will vary considerably with the task allotted to them. In the main they will be small, since the narrow front and many obstacles prevent the use of large forces, especially tanks. The normal composition of an assault group is as follows:-

One to two infantry sections.

One to two medium MGs.

One to two anti-tank rifles.

Infantry (close support) guns (these are used for firing over open sights).

One section of sappers, with demolition charges.

One section of sappers to deal with mines etc.

One to two flame throwers.

One platoon of 2 inch mortars.

One to two tanks.

~~SECRET~~
~~TOP SECRET~~

d. Two waves of the Attack.

Each of these groups operates in waves. The first wave consists of several detachments of 6 to 8 men and includes Tommy gunners and sappers. These detachments are well supplied with hand weapons, including grenades and tools for dealing with obstacles. If tanks are employed they are attached to this wave and advance along routes previously laid down. The second wave covers the first wave by its fire. It therefore includes in its composition medium and light MGs, snipers, 2 inch mortars, anti-tank rifles and close support infantry guns. This second wave has the further task of consolidating the positions captured by the first wave and of mopping up. In addition to these two waves, a group will contain a mobile reserve, to repulse counter-attacks and reinforce when necessary.

e. Infiltration Tactics.

Once the town has been broken into infiltration tactics are used. Troops make use of gardens, yards, the sewage systems, etc., for moving forward. If they have to move along streets they do so in bounds. As soon as each block or strongpoint is captured it is immediately consolidated. As much cover as possible is provided for all supporting weapons.

f. The task of Divisional Artillery.

It is not usual for the main bulk of divisional artillery to take part in the assault of a town. This is centralised for operations in a mass against enemy artillery, communications, reserves, or lines of withdrawal and counter-attack. In warfare of this type observation is difficult. Therefore a F.O.O. moves forward with each assault group so as to control fire. Similarly, command posts must be well forward and the number of OPs, which must also be well forward, is increased.

g. Communications.

The best and indeed only reliable method of communication is W.T. Line communication is liable to be interfered with by demolitions, falling buildings, fire, etc., inside the town. Similarly, runners are frequently picked off by enemy sniper posts specially detailed for the task of eliminating such personnel.

II. GERMAN DEFENCE OF ORTONA.

(Source: 1 Canadian Corps)

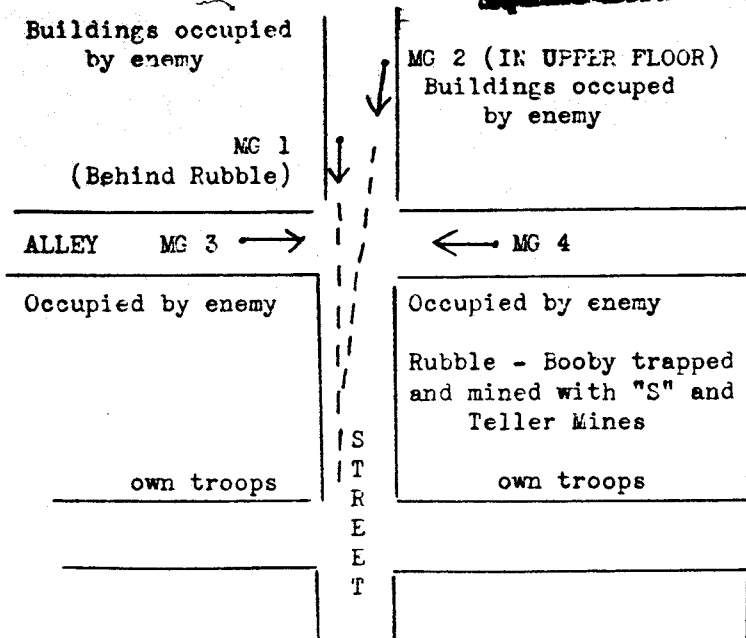
The German defence of ORTONA was well planned. Based on a good knowledge of the town, the approaches, the streets, the alleys, routes from room to room, building to building and street to street, so he sited his weapons. It was a bitter defence with the outstanding feature acknowledged by our troops as "sheer guts".

The enemy had chosen his 'killing ground' and sited all his weapons very well to cover this. Where the approach could not be covered in its entirety he demolished buildings and created rubble obstacles. These he had invariably covered by fire.

Groups of MGs were always sited each one supporting the other. The diagram on page C-3 shows a typical defence of a street and alley crossing.

In the diagram MG 1 is sited to cover the top of the rubble pile that had been created by the enemy on the main street. MG 2 is sited in the height of a building to cover our side of the rubble, i.e. our approach to it. MGs 3 and 4 are tied in to support and cover any break through over the rubble pile and attack on MG 1. In most cases enemy-created-rubble was booby trapped and mined with "S" and Teller mines.

~~U.S. SECRET~~
~~RESTRICTED~~



Flamethrowers were used, although NOT extensively, in a similar role to a supporting MG. In the few instances that they were used they were sited from a ground position behind a rubble pile to cover approaches to street crossings. No casualties were suffered from the enemy flamethrowers. The general opinion of those that came up against them was that they were terrifying.

Similarly the enemy's A Tk guns were well sited to cover tank approaches and were well camouflaged. Each gun was all around defended by supporting MGs, machine-pistols and snipers.

Mortars were not used extensively and when used it was not observed fire but fire on areas of the town that were behind those areas of our troops that had been committed. Several instances occurred of the enemy mortaring his own area.

The German stick grenade, very much similar in its blast effect to our 69, caused few casualties and these were minor ones from the bits of tin the grenade creates on bursting. Cases occurred where a man would be advancing and have 3-5 of these grenades burst right beside him with no ill effects. The blast effect inside a room is stunning.

The enemy used few phosphorous smoke bombs.

Enemy sniping was very accurate and snipers were used to support sited MGs and A. Tk guns.

The corners of important intersections were invariably blown to create rubble obstacles impassable to tanks. Some of these, twelve feet high, were booby-trapped and mined. These also provided the enemy with ground cover. A systematic demolition plan was employed on buildings as he was driven back. A few instances occurred where the enemy prepared a building for demolition and blew it after our troops had occupied it.

At no time did the enemy make a determined counter-attack to retake the buildings from which he had been driven out. Always alert he would immediately re-occupy buildings that our troops had captured but evacuated in order to allow tanks and A.Tk guns to engage adjoining buildings. His defence of the town was well planned and he stuck to it - there was no surrender of any of his positions. These had to be knocked out one by one and if our troops did not get up and occupy them immediately after disabling the personnel, the enemy would re-man them almost instantaneously. This was a grim and bitter defence, undoubtedly very costly, for some of his positions he re-manned as many as four times before our troops could actually occupy the ground or buildings.

~~U. S. SECRET~~
~~Equivalent British SECRET~~

Backing up all the time, the enemy knew the town layout well. With this advantage as he was forced back he was able to carefully plan his 'killing ground' and site his weapons accordingly. It was only with great difficulty and determination that our troops wrested from the enemy the control of this ground and secured killing ground of their own.